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FBIS 16

PANAMA: VICE PRESIDENT, ILLUECA COMMENT ON REAGAN SPEECH

PA250252 PANAMA CITY TELEVISORA NACIONAL IN SPANISH 2300 GMT
24 FEB 82

(EXCERPTS) FOLLOWING THE SPEECH OF U.S. PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN BEFORE THE OAS THIS STATION CONTACTED THE PANAMANIAN VICE PRESIDENT RICARDO DE LA ESPRIELLA, CURRENTLY IN CHARGE OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH DURING PRESIDENT ARISTIDES ROYO'S ABSENCE.

VICE PRESIDENT DE LA ESPRIELLA FELT THAT REAGAN'S PLAN IS A GOOD STEP TOWARD FINDING A SOLUTION TO A POLITICAL PROBLEM WITH DEEP ECONOMIC ROOTS. WE CONSIDER THE SPEECH, HE SAID, A SOBER, WELL-DEFINED AND PRUDENT EXPOSITION.

BASED ON THE SITUATION OF THE GREAT MAJORITY OF CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN NATIONS, WHERE THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM IS PREDOMINANT, WE FEEL, DE LA ESPRIELLA NOTED, THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN'S PROPOSED AID PROGRAM, BASED ON INVESTMENTS AND COMMERCIAL TRADE SYSTEM, COULD BE EFFECTIVE IF PUT INTO PRACTICE. WE TRUST, HE ADDED, THAT IT WILL NOT IMPOSE A POLITICAL PRICE ON THOSE COUNTRIES SUCH AS OURS, THAT ARE INDEPENDENT AND RESPECTFUL OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION OF PEOPLES.

THE VICE PRESIDENT NOTED THAT THE OUTSTANDING POINTS OF THE PROGRAM APPEAR TO BE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE PRODUCTION AREAS ON WHICH OUR COUNTRIES' ECONOMIES ARE BASED.

MEANWHILE, PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER JORGE ILLUECA CONSIDERED THIS AFTERNOON PRESIDENT REAGAN'S PROPOSED ECONOMIC PLAN FOR CENTRAL AMERICA AND FELT THAT THE U.S. CHIEF OF STATE SHOULD NOT HAVE MENTIONED IN HIS SPEECH MEXICAN PRESIDENT JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO'S PEACE PROPOSAL. ILLUECA SAID, HOWEVER, THAT DESPITE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE U.S. PROPOSAL AND THE FIGURES MENTIONED FOR THE AREA BY THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA (ECLAT), PRESIDENT REAGAN'S SPEECH STIRS HOPES FOR THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION.

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ILLUECA, WHO COMMENTED SHORTLY AFTER PRESIDENT REAGAN'S SPEECH, COMPARED THE AMOUNT OF THE ECONOMIC AID ANNOUNCED TODAY WITH THE $450 MILLION ALREADY GIVEN TO NICARAGUA BY MEXICO. ILLUECA NOTED THAT OF THE $350 MILLION ANNOUNCED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, $150 MILLION IS ALREADY COMMITTED TO EL SALVADOR.

REFERRING TO DIRECT U.S. AID, HE SAID THAT IT IS STILL FAR BELOW THE FIGURES MENTIONED BY ECLAT FOR CENTRAL AMERICA. ACCORDING TO ILLUECA, ECLAT SAID THAT $20 BILLION IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS IS REQUIRED TO GET CENTRAL AMERICA ON ITS FEET ECONOMICALLY.

HOWEVER, ILLUECA NOTED THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN'S INTEREST IS APPRECIATED AND ENCOURAGED BY US. ILLUECA FELT THAT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE UNITED STATES, THE EEC AND JAPAN TO LEARN ABOUT THE REGION'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY IN COSTA RICA, WHERE EMERGENCY MEASURES ARE CURRENTLY NEEDED.

ANALYZING THE POLITICAL ASPECT OF REAGAN'S SPEECH, THE PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FELT THAT THE PROBLEMS OF CENTRAL AMERICA CANNOT BE SOLVED THROUGH MILITARY ASSISTANCE, WHETHER FROM THE USSR, CUBA OR ANYWHERE ELSE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE DESIRABLE IF PRESIDENT REAGAN HAD EXAMINED OR TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION THE MEXICAN PRESIDENT JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO'S PROPOSAL. ILLUECA NOTED THAT THE VOICES OF THE LATIN AMERICANS AND THEIR STATESMEN SHOULD BE HEEDED WHEN ONE DEALS WITH LATIN AMERICA PROBLEMS.

RECENTLY, THE MEXICAN CHIEF OF STATE PROPOSED THAT CUBA, NICARAGUA AND THE UNITED STATES AGREE NOT TO SUPPLY ARMS TO THE CENTRAL AMERICA AREA AND THAT AN EQUILIBRIUM SHOULD BE SOUGHT THROUGH A DIALOGUE. THIS SITUATION CONCERNS US LATIN AMERICANS; WE ARE OPPOSED TO MOBILIZATION, WHETHER FROM THE EAST OR THE WEST, AS IT WILL MEAN BLOODSHED AND SORROW TO THE RESIDENTS OF THESE COUNTRIES, PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER JORGE ILLUECA CONCLUDED.

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